

# HYBRID PROJECT MANAGEMENT THROUGH THE LENS OF THEORY OF TEMPORARY ORGANIZATION

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## Abstract

Hybrid project management (HPM) is an approach combining elements of traditional and agile management to gain advantages and suppress the disadvantages of both to increase project success. Although the concept of HPM has been developed for some time, it still needs more clarity, leaving uncertainty about the criteria and methods for effectively implementing it in a particular setting. This paper aims to progress on the specification of how to apply HPM in an organization through the lens of the theory of temporary organization (TTO). The method follows a conceptual article approach established as typology, which identifies essential dimensions of the concept to elaborate more on the relatively general concept framed by the research. Looking at HPM through a TTO lens opens up new ideas on how to set up and manage projects that require both flexibility and control. The pursuit of purely traditional or agile project methodologies can hinder the best possibilities for setting up projects optimally to fit the purpose. As an approach, HPM is more open and flexible for use in different organizational contexts than using either approach alone.

**Key words:** hybrid project management, theory of temporary organization, traditional project management, plan-driven approach, agile project management

**JEL Code:** O32; O21; H43

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## Introduction

The shift from traditional hierarchical structures to more flexible, self-organizing systems in the modern dynamic business landscape has led to a transformation in project management (PM) paradigms (Kuster et al., 2023). This shift gives rise to Hybrid Project Management (HPM), a PM approach combining elements of traditional and agile PM to gain advantages and suppress the disadvantages of both to increase project success (Krupa et al., 2023, p. 351). Earlier research has demonstrated that the application of a specific PM methodology can account for 22.3% of the variation in project success, indicating the importance of an effective

PM approach in achieving desired outcomes (Joslin & Müller, 2015). It is anticipated that the conditions fostering the adoption of hybrid approaches are unlikely to diminish, with HPM potentially becoming a prevalent, if not the dominant, PM strategy in the foreseeable future (Gemino et al., 2021; Serrador & Pinto, 2015).

Despite its burgeoning popularity (Copola Azenha et al., 2021; Gemino et al., 2021; Reiff & Schlegel, 2022), the precise form and application of HPM remain indefinite. Existing studies offer mere glimpses into the specific practices employed within individual organizations but fail to provide a clear roadmap for others to follow (Krupa & Hájek, in press).

Considering these challenges, our paper endeavors to illuminate the decision-making process behind crafting an effective HPM approach. We employ the theory of temporary organization (TTO) as our theoretical lens, guiding us toward a deeper understanding of the key organizational and project factors that shape the selection of PM practices. By doing so, we seek to contribute a more systemic view of the HPM application process, which is often overlooked in the current literature.

Our research aims to fortify the theoretical foundation of HPM, aiding practitioners in understanding the influential factors behind specific HPM manifestations and providing a clearer path to applying HPM in a variety of contexts.

## **1 Project management approaches**

First, it is useful to define the terms and characterize the PM approaches, including listing the characteristic project practices. A PM approach is a set of principles and guidelines which define the way a specific project is managed. A methodology is a system of practices, techniques, procedures, and rules used by those that work in a discipline. A PM practice can then be defined as a technique or procedure used to manage an aspect of a methodology within a project. Conceptually, practices can be considered separately from their origin within a methodology and could be combined across methodologies or approaches within the same project. (Gemino et al., 2021, p. 162)

The traditional project management (TPM) approach is defined by linear and predictable project planning practices designed to achieve a well-understood, achievable set of objectives (Gemino et al., 2021, p. 162). The ultimate goal of the TPM approach is optimization and efficiency in following an initial detailed project plan to finalize the project within the planned time, budget, and scope (Špundak, 2014, p. 941).

The characteristic practices of TPM are hierarchical decomposition of the project scope using Work Breakdown Structure (WBS), usage of the Gantt chart and Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT), Critical Path Method (CPM) or Precedence Diagram Method (PDM) to produce and visualize scheduling network diagrams, using change requests and similar tools for scope control, risk management, quality control using checklists, audits, and heavy reporting focusing on the comparison of reality and plan as Earned Value Analysis (EVA).

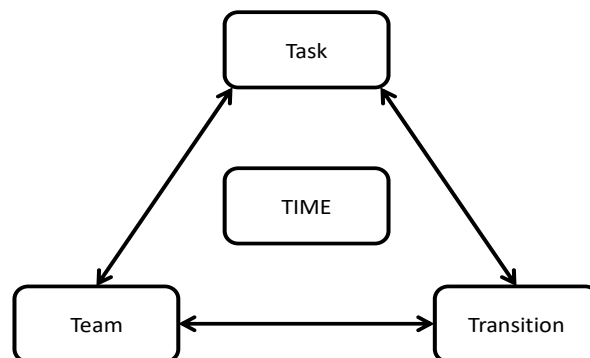
The ability to adapt to changes and break down work into iterative phases within the adaptive process is a key aspect of the agile project management (APM) approach (Gemino et al., 2021, p. 162). The characteristic practices of APM are iterative development, storing work to be done in Product Backlog, and practicing ceremonies such as Stand-ups, Sprint Planning, Sprint Reviews, and Retrospectives.

## 2 Theory of Temporary Organization

The central theoretical framework guiding our examination of HPM in this paper is TTO, as proposed by Lundin & Söderholm (1995). TTO provides a conceptualization of an organizational design characterized by its temporary nature, typically structured with the specific aim of accomplishing a designated goal or project. This theory was chosen due to its potential to elucidate the effective management and organization of temporal, objective-focused collaborations, with an emphasis on maximizing efficiency and adaptability.

TTO introduced four basic concepts, time, task, team, and transition (see Figure 1), to describe the internal action orientation of temporary organizations (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995).

**Fig. 1: Original framework of the TTO**



Source: Lundin a Söderholm (1995, p. 451)

Time is of the essence in understanding a temporary organization. Managing time for temporary organizations is a more complex undertaking than for permanent ones because the available time is limited and will ultimately expire. The impetus for establishing a temporary organization is the need to fulfill a specific task, and activities associated with the task play a pivotal role in shaping the organization. Temporary organization members prioritize the task at hand more than their counterparts in permanent organizations. A team is formed to address a particular task within a specific timeframe. Temporary assignments often entail team members coming from different organizational backgrounds, which implies that the team is reliant on other structured environments beyond its current temporary organization. Transition can have two distinct interpretations, both of which are pertinent to the project and its result. It may denote a substantial alteration in the way the task is carried out, or it may refer to a shift in the participants' perception of the task and their ideas on how to complete it. The necessary actions for achieving fine-tuning objectives will differ from those required for a total overhaul.

### **3 Applying the TTO Perspective to HPM Settings**

Although the TTO emerged at a time when traditional approaches based on detailed planning were applied, all TTO concepts are equally valid and important for hybrid and agile approaches. At their core, these concepts are sufficiently universal and timeless. Table 1 illustrates the comparison of traditional, agile, and hybrid approaches to PM within the individual concepts of the theory.

Time plays a dual role in HPM. Like for any temporary organization, it defines the duration of its existence and is linked to the task that the temporary organization aims to accomplish. While TPM relies on detailed schedule planning at the beginning of the project, APM fixes time through fixed-length iterations and utilizes timeboxing, although often in the context of continuous endless product development. HPM allows for the combination of both approaches.

The planning horizon in HPM combines the long-term planning characteristics of TPM for the entire project and short-term plans for the upcoming sprint in APM. Additionally, time is a perspective that limits the utilization of certain agile elements in HPM because many agile practices are associated with an investment that makes sense primarily for long-term utilization (Bowring & Paasivaara, 2021). The benefit of the time aspect is not only working with deadlines or schedules but also the necessary emphasis on the importance of prioritization,

where both traditional and agile practices can be used, in which better results are achieved through aiming for fewer goals (Kukreja et al., 2013).

**Tab. 1: Typology analysis of traditional, agile, and hybrid approach**

		<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Agile</b>	<b>Hybrid</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>Deadlines</b>	Part of schedule planned up-front	Timeboxing product	Both hard and soft time limits
	<b>Planning horizon</b>	Long-term	Short-term	Both long-term and short-term
<b>Task</b>	<b>Complexity</b>	Simple Complicated	Complex Chaotic	Complicated Complex
	<b>Requirements stability</b>	Stable	Volatile	Volatile
<b>Team</b>	<b>Size</b>	Small Large	Small preferred Large with scaling	Large
	<b>Customer engagement</b>	Limited	Continuous	Flexible
	<b>Spatial layout</b>	Colocation Distributed	Colocation	Colocation Distributed
	<b>Roles</b>	Specialized as required	More general with overlap	According to the setup
	<b>Experience needed</b>	Low	Medium	High
<b>Transition</b>	<b>Delivery</b>	At once	In increments up to continuous	Flexible
	<b>Regulation affinity</b>	Suitable	Inappropriate	Suitable

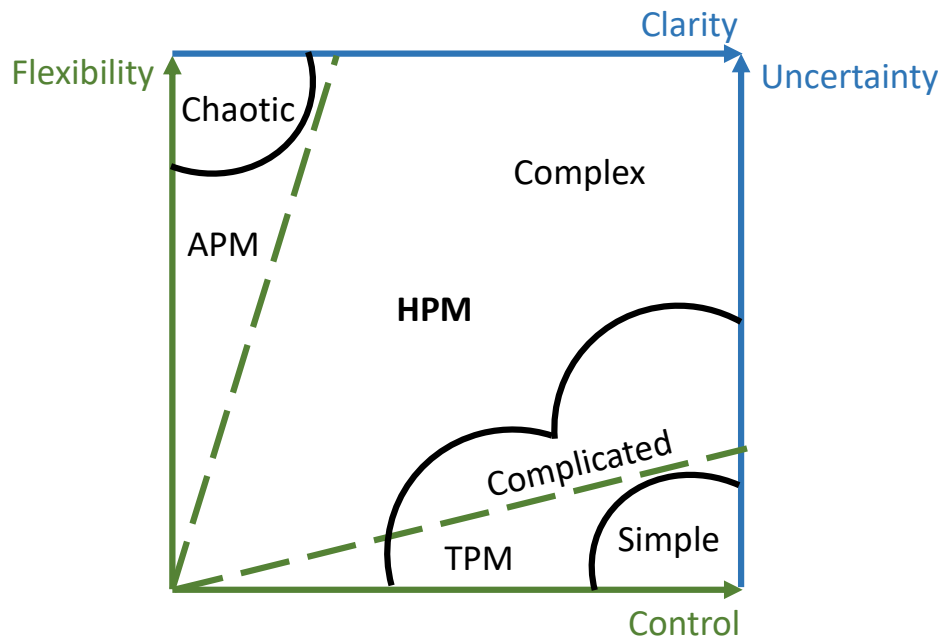
Source: author's elaboration based on (Copola Azenha et al., 2021; Costantini et al., 2021; Gemino et al., 2021; Krupa & Hájek, in press; Kuster et al., 2023, p. 29)

The task, especially its nature, is one of the critical factors in defining the PM approach because the project's temporality (emphasized by TTO) is framed by fulfilling a scope through finished tasks. The complexity of a task or project can be ascertained by utilizing the Cynefin framework along with the Stacey Matrix (Kuster et al., 2023, p. 27). The task can be categorized into four categories: Simple, Complicated, Complex, and Chaotic. Suppose we apply the individual project approaches according to the necessary flexibility, which is a strong point of APM, and control, an essential characteristic of TPM, to this categorization. In that case, we arrive at combinations (see Figure 2) of which categories of projects are suitable for each PM approach.

HPM is a demanding PM approach for the temporary organization's team. The achievement of benefits from both approaches depends primarily on the team's ability to work in both traditional and agile ways. A crucial aspect is the experience of the project manager, who must have a deep understanding of both approaches, their strengths, and weaknesses, including individual project practices (Kuster et al., 2023). A suitable combination of practices,

based on expert judgment or supported by a hybrid metamodel, achieves optimal methodology alignment tailored to the specific project. This enables working with large teams in a flexible manner and involving customers as needed. Likewise, hybrid project organization can be adjusted to meet regulatory requirements, and transitions can occur flexibly and according to the nature of project deliverables.

**Fig. 2: PM approach in relation to Stacy's matrix project typology**



Source: author's elaboration using Kusters et al. (2023, p. 28)

The purpose of the transition is linked to monitoring and control (sprint review, stage-gate mechanism) and can be factual, such as the official end of product support, or methodological, such as the end of a sprint, serving, among other things, as a quality management tool. Identifying these purposes allows, firstly, not to forget and, secondly, to better identify optimal practices from the transition area.

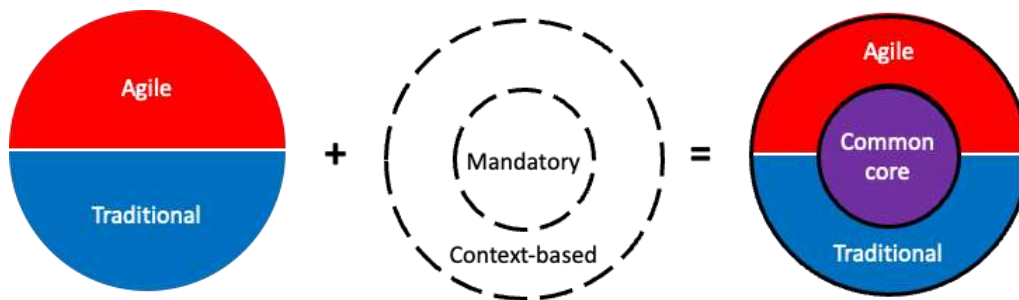
In the context of TTO's transition, HPM exhibits adaptability and compliance simultaneously. Unlike APM's fluid nature, HPM aligns with regulatory standards by supporting structured transitions. It enables detailed planning for initial compliance whilst retaining the agility to accommodate regulatory updates. Therefore, HPM presents a balanced transition between adaptability and regulatory adherence, marking its aptness for regulated project environments.

#### 4 Navigating Practice Selection for HPM

HPM represents a paradigm shift, encompassing both TPM and APM practices. This integration provides a versatile model capable of adapting to the unique needs of any project.

At the heart of this approach is the understanding that some practices are tied closely to the properties of a particular approach and depend highly on the context, while others are universal and can be applied broadly. This recognition forms the basis for our model of HPM practice selection (see Figure 3), which incorporates a core set of practices applicable to virtually all projects. These 'common core' practices form the bedrock of HPM, ensuring a baseline level of competency and consistency across all projects.

**Fig. 3: Composition of PM practices for HPM**



Source: author's elaboration

Beyond this common core, the selection of further practices is governed by the project's context and specific requirements. This necessitates a balance between agile and traditional methods, which must be carefully calibrated to suit the project at hand. In a sense, the core practices form a PM 'toolkit', while the additional practices can be thought of as specialized tools chosen for their suitability to the task at hand.

The selection and adaptation of PM practices should not be a one-time decision within a project but an ongoing, iterative process. This encourages the development of an adaptive governance structure, which is inherently responsive to dynamic project contexts, ensuring that practices stay effective and relevant throughout the project lifecycle.

In essence, HPM requires the project manager to be not just a planner and executor but also a navigator - charting a course through an ever-changing landscape, armed with a versatile set of tools and the knowledge to use them effectively.

## 5 Conclusion

Overall, this article contributes to understanding the application of hybrid project management (HPM) by a conceptual approach, shedding light on the implementation process and offering insights for practitioners seeking to implement HPM effectively.

By applying the theory of temporary organization (TTO) perspective, the article utilizes its concepts, time, task, team, and transition, as a framework that influences the selection of HPM as a project management approach. The contribution of this paper lies in specifying the decision process of choosing and combining practices in HPM, providing clarity on the factors influencing specific HPM manifestations, and offering guidance for practitioners on applying HPM in different organizational and contextual settings.

Alongside these insights, several limitations are noteworthy. Our reliance on theoretical interpretation could lead to interpretation bias, as the real-world application of theories can bring unforeseen nuances to light. Additionally, our exclusive use of the TTO narrows our view to project-based changes, potentially causing us to overlook the benefits of establishing permanent organizational structures to enact change.

In response to these limitations, future research in HPM holds promising potential and requires further exploration, focusing on empirically assessing the success of hybrid projects (Copola Azenha et al., 2021; Gemino et al., 2021). It is essential to investigate how organizations adapt and experiment with HPM in their unique contexts, possibly through in-depth case studies across various industries. Simultaneously, there is a call for improved methodological support for hybridization, pointing toward the need for new tools and frameworks to navigate HPM complexities effectively (Copola Azenha et al., 2021; Costantini et al., 2021). Addressing these research gaps can help scholars expand theoretical knowledge, refine existing models, and provide new directions for the academic discourse in the field of project management.

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